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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 001359

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DEPARTMENT FOR S/CRS

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TAGS: PREL PREF EAID CE SU CO HA RP SO NO
SUBJECT: ENGAGING NORWAY ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
WORLDWIDE

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i., Kevin M. Johnson for reasons 1.4
b and d

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On October 31, the DCM and Pol/Econ officers met with Tore Hattrem, Director General of the MFA's Peace and Reconciliation Section and other members of his team. The meeting began and intensified a dialogue on Norwegian peace efforts in several global hot spots: Sri Lanka, Philippines, Colombia, Haiti, Somalia, and Sudan. Norwegians provided updates in these regions and shared their philosophical approaches to transformational diplomacy. They welcome ever-close cooperation with us on peace and reconciliation efforts and are particularly interested to learn more about State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. END SUMMARY

A NEW OFFICE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

¶2. (SBU) The MFA's Peace and Reconciliation Section (PRS) was formed to concentrate and apply the experience that Norwegian officials have gained from facilitating peace negotiation processes around the world. PRS is loosely organized along regional lines with two to three person groups focused on specific conflicts such as Sri Lanka, Philippines, Colombia, Haiti, and Somalia. Due to the large Norwegian commitment in the Sudan, work on that conflict is kept within the regional Africa bureau (with its members consulting regularly with their PRS colleagues). The determination of which countries are handled more by PRS or more by regional bureaus is made on an ad hoc basis.

¶3. (C) Norwegians feel that as a small country they can often play a key role in areas where the UN or major powers cannot easily work (or where such parties may not be welcomed). Factors contributing to Norway's decision to assist with conflict resolution include the targeted parties' willingness to negotiate, a request for Norwegian assistance, and an understanding of how Norwegian assistance will help. The degree of involvement is dependent on where Norwegians

believe they can be most effective. For example, in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, Norway is the lead facilitator of peace negotiations. Alternatively, in Sudan and Colombia, Norway is one of several co-ordinating countries. While in Haiti and Somalia, Norway plays a supporting role providing political reconciliation, humanitarian, and civil society assistance.

WANTING TO WORK WITH THE U.S.

¶4. (C) The PRS said they strongly value U.S. engagement, describing the combination of Norwegian quiet diplomacy and U.S. influence as an effective tool. They see us as having similar values and often working in the same places. PRS Director General Tore Hattrem noted that the U.S. and Norway played key roles in bringing the Sudan peace agreement to fruition and that we should continue to find areas for close cooperation. He was particularly interested in the development of the SCRS and the parallels between U.S. efforts to implement transformational diplomacy and Norway's similar approach. (Note: Other Norwegian officials also stress that whatever our differences, both the U.S. and Norway are transformational rather than "status quo" nations. End Note) The MFA also works closely with other members of the international community (including the UN, regional multi-lateral organizations, and NGOs) on humanitarian and development projects to facilitate peace agreement implementation.

NORWAY'S COUNTRY SPECIFIC EFFORTS

¶5. (C) SRI LANKA: Norway had hoped to leave the most recent Geneva talks with firm dates for further discussions. However, for several reasons (including the parties pursuit of divergent negotiating strategies and the GSL's internal divisions), no progress resulted. Post-Geneva, Special Envoy Jon Hanssen-Bauer believes that violence will continue but not lead to all out war. Norway will carefully look at GSL and LTTE follow-on actions as they consider their next steps (See reftel).

¶6. (C) PHILIPPINES: Norway has led negotiations between the Philippine government (GRP) and the Maoist New People's Army (NPA) since 2001. Talks are now suspended following NPA withdrawal from a non-paper agreement. Norway is circumspect about re-entering negotiations without commitments from both sides. The NPA in particular needs to realize that pre-conditions such as a change in their status as a U.S. listed terrorist organization are not deliverable by the GRP, and should not be used as conditions for a resumption of negotiations.

¶7. (C) COLOMBIA: Norwegians are party to negotiations between the Colombian government and the guerrilla group Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN). Along with Switzerland and Spain, Norway coordinated recent discussions in Havana which Norwegians viewed as "disappointing" since the parties did not seriously delve into contentious issues. Despite coordinators prompting discussions on broad topics of civil society participation and creating the right environment for a peace process (i.e. halting kidnappings), little progress was made. Coordinators agreed on a mechanism to fund process costs and to bring in international experts on specific issues without violating financial sanctions resulting from the ELN being placed on the U.S terrorist sanctions list. Norway noted Venezuela's possible desire to play an increased role in the talks, perhaps at Cuba's expense.

¶8. (C) HAITI: In Haiti, Norway's main focus has been on political reconciliation, including strengthening political parties. PRS emphasized that they are not a major donor or facilitator and that Norway was concentrating its efforts in areas where Norway may offer special expertise such as working for constitutional reform and encouraging political process programs to forge consensus among political forces on

how to behave in a democracy. However, they recently decided to compliment their political reconciliation efforts with some assistance through a Brazilian NGO working in the slums.

Norway believes stability and reconciliation requires development deliverables among those most likely to threaten the fragile system - slum dwellers - and is making a new, modest contribution.

¶9. (C) SOMALIA: Norwegians see talks in Khartoum between the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI) and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) as positive. However, PRS expressed pessimism over near term prospects for peace, wondering how the international community can continue to work with this failed state. Nonetheless, Norway plans to increase contact with Islamists as they see the ICU developing a nationalist agenda that may force the TFI to strike a political deal, thereby providing some governing stability in the country. They also plan to increase engagement with Eritrea and Ethiopia as they see the potential for the conflict to spread across borders through proxy armies or direct intervention.

¶10. (C) SUDAN: Norway is working to broaden the Darfur Peace Agreement and support U.S. efforts to hold a non-signatories conference. In addition to humanitarian and long-term development assistance for the South, Norwegians are advising the government in Khartoum and the Government of South Sudan on capacity building to better use oil revenues. Norway is also interested in coordinating aid and development programs in East Sudan in support of the recent peace agreement between East Sudanese rebel groups and the

government in Khartoum. The Ambassador will host a separate meeting on Sudan with NGO and MFA representatives on November 16. He met separately with Development Minister Solheim to discuss Sri Lanka and other areas on October 30.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Norwegians are active in conflict resolution around the world and seem prepared to engage on more fronts (provided they are invited to do so). They are also eager to maintain close cooperation and coordination with us in areas where we work together such as East Africa, Sudan, and Haiti.

One immediate result of our discussions was to facilitate a phone conversation on November 3 between Norwegian Development Minister Solheim and U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios, prior to the Minister's visit to Sudan later this month. The PRS is also interested in our philosophical approach to conflict areas and in identifying ways to reinforce each other's efforts. As part of this, PRS wants to learn more about how SCRS works and would like to meet Ambassador Herbst and SCRS either in Washington or Oslo.

Johnson